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Of all the experiences I had growing up in Nigeria, the most memorable ones were the several times I was asked what I wanted to be in the future. A student was not considered “trendy” if the response was not “a physician,” “a pharmacist,” “an engineer,” or “a lawyer.” This came as no surprise as I grew up in a bustling city and was surrounded by family and friends with such ambitions. However, my inquisitiveness regarding Mother Nature steered my interest off the path of my peers to the field of Agriculture, thereby making me not “trendy.”

I picked up this interest during a visit to my mother’s village to see my grandmother, whom was a self-sufficient farmer. While there, I vividly remember asking her numerous questions about the different crops she grew and harvested, as well as the animals she raised. I remember asking: “how did the vegetables grow?” “how long did it take from planting to harvesting?” and “how did you care for and breed the goats and sheep?” Indeed, I was amazed at the different stages of growth and transformations of the crops and animals. Every morning during this trip and for many more trips to come over the years, I would go to the farm with my grandmother hoping to see fruits develop from plants and the livestock deliver their young. Even though, at certain times her crops and animals did not do well, I always wanted to know why and how it could be done better. Being aware that food is essential for our well-being, I wanted to expand my knowledge and gain experiences in the field of Agriculture as this would enable me to undo what my grandmother may have been doing incorrectly. My fascination by these attributes of Mother Nature cemented my decision to obtain a Bachelors of Agriculture with a focus on Agricultural Extension at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

During my undergraduate program, I discovered that there are various advanced disciplines in the field of Agriculture ranging from Agricultural Business Management, Extension, Plant and Animal Sciences and others. This made me realize Agriculture was not just limited to planting of crops and rearing of animals. Also, my five years of educational background in Agriculture and multiple internships during my undergraduate program at different Agricultural institutes in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria further reaffirmed my interest in the Agricultural field. In one experience I had the opportunity to work as an intern in several

departments where I participated in a study of different production stages of various crops and their by-products. A consistent and vital lesson I learned from those experiences was that any plant could have a myriad of uses no matter how small it might be. I have also had the opportunity to holistically learn about animal husbandry, which has served as a window for understanding that the disparity between man and animal is infinitesimal.

In completing my undergraduate program, I focused on investigating catfish production practices among small-scale farmers. This three-month-long on-the-ground research experience allowed me to interview, shadow, and work with thirty respondents on their catfish production practices and breeding processes from brood stock to table-sized catfish. I completed an in-depth, hands-on investigation of the fish feed, as well as the hybridization and selection processes for producing strong offspring. This experience reaffirmed my conviction that Agriculture was no longer limited to peasant farmers but had transcended to involve affluent individuals. I was able to develop a teaching manual through a compilation of the different stages of the catfish production for catfish farmers in that geographic location. This experience was greatly fulfilling because one of the reasons I studied Agriculture was to be able to give feedback to farmers in areas where they have difficulty.

I decided to advance and diversify my educational experience in Plant Science with a major focus in Entomology at Tennessee State University, since insects play a major role in the growth of crops. Through my Master's program and thesis work, I am learning and researching how insects can be exploited for bountiful crop production and the importance of conservation of these insects to continue the ecosystem cycle. These creatures, as little as they are, have a myriad of uses. They are instrumental for continued food availability and other services, which we enjoy. I want to be able to disregard the notion people have about these insects and inspire others to explore the various disciplines of Agriculture, while trying to dismantle societal misconceptions of who was meant to study Agriculture. I aspire to be involved in Agricultural extension practices in the future to teach the next generation about the wonders of Mother Nature and to reassure them that it is okay to not be "trendy," but to be #RootedinAg as I am.

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